

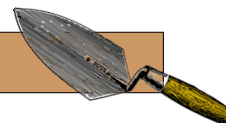


Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



Volume 22 Issue 2

Summer 2019



The Chairman reflects

I've promised your editor I'll be brief this month as he tells me, quite rightly, that he has lots of much more important stuff to squeeze in. But I must just say what a pleasure it is to see Digging Deeper creating so much activity in Appleby at present. Martin Railton reports that he now has 35 volunteers on his books and, since March, we've run a whole series of training, field walking, geophysics and test-pitting days, all of which have been fully subscribed. In July we'll be opening up our first trench of the season too. See either our Facebook page or the website for details.

Speaking of the website, I hope you like the new "look-and-feel" that was introduced shortly after Christmas.

Smartphone users are now supported properly too and we've also been sorting out our archives. Newsletters and talk write-ups now go right back to the very first years of Apparch.

One sad piece of news that I'm sorry to report, however, is that, in April, we lost Margaret Albon, one of our longest-standing and most faithful members. Margaret died after a short illness and will be greatly missed by us all. We send our condolences to her family and many friends.

In conclusion, please note the dates for the upcoming Long Meg and Eskdalemuir outings at the end of this newsletter. Weather permitting I think these will both be great fun.

With best wishes for a great summer of Archaeology,

Martin Joyce

A Roman bath house found at Carlisle Cricket Club



Kevin Mounsey of Wardell-Armstrong Archaeology, gave a talk to the Group on 11th April about the Roman Bath House at Carlisle. The Bath House was discovered beneath the old tennis courts at Carlisle Cricket Club. The club's pavilion was flooded by the Eden, December 2015 and it was subsequently decided to move it to higher ground. However the site selected was close to Hadrian's Wall and Stanwix Fort, the largest of the wall forts, built to guard the Eden bridgehead along the western route to and from Scotland. Consequently because of its potential importance, the site had to be assessed for archaeologically significant remains before construction started.

Phase I: four trenches were excavated in June 2017. A deep test pit at one end revealed Roman remains, while a medieval rubbish or cess pit with 12-13th Century Medieval pottery was unearthed in another trench. A further trench uncovered a post-medieval ground surface with Roman archaeology below at some 1.2 metres and at 2 metres in a fourth trench. A levelling floor of crushed building rubble, lime and sand with hypocaust tiles was found in the central area between these trenches, together with a concrete arch or flue of later Roman construction on 'heated' ground. A later curved wall, well preserved pillae and Roman concrete floor were also discovered with part of a quarry wall where worked stone had been removed, probably during the medieval period.

Other artefacts included bullet-shaped vaulting tiles - 30cm long x 10cm diameter tubes, each with a narrow end shaped so they could be slotted together and used to support an arching roof or dome of the bath house. This design possibly developed over 700 years, following a method used by North African potters in 300BC and was probably intended to reduce the weight of the roof, enhance insulation and stop fire outbreaks. A stoke hole and flue allowed the hot air from the fire.

Contents

Page 2: Holiday in Nabataea or trading incense in warm and cold climates
Page 3: Vernacular buildings of Cumbria
Page 4: Palaeography Workshops & Summer Events

to pass under floors of the bath house, while box tiles in the walls piped hot air through the walls. Some of the metal pins used to hold the box tiles together were found nearby. There was also evidence of flagstone and concrete floors with supporting column pillae. Tip lines could be seen in the soil section highlighting pits where material had been removed ('robbed') and later infilled with soil and rubbish.

Phase II: excavation continued in January 2018 over a larger area. A new trench uncovered a layer of dark earth formed from smoke blackened thatch, decayed weeds, timber and earth floors of medieval age, partially churned up by ploughing, mixing Roman and medieval artefacts together. This layer was removed to reveal a quern stone, oven and a capped drain flowing in the direction of the river. Large curb stones edging a road surface of cobbles may represent part of the Stanegate, a Roman road between Carlisle and Corbridge on the Tyne. One part of the site was left unexcavated because of the delicate state of the archaeology.

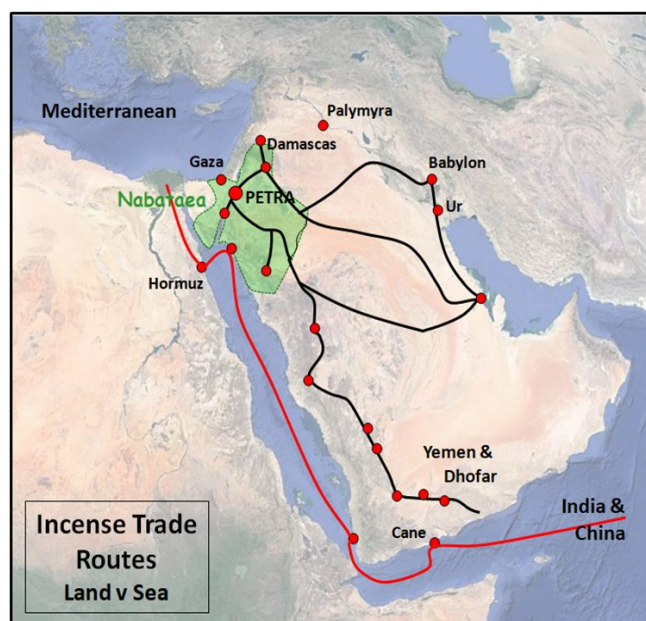
Several pits were found across the site. One produced finds of medieval pottery and bone. Others were used for quarrying stone initially used in the 'sub'-Roman period and again in the 12-13th centuries.

Carlisle Cricket Club is now applying for a three year Heritage Lottery Grant to continue this work. Certainly there is still much more information to be gathered about the site with its possible links to Stanwix Fort and the Stanegate. This project was funded initially by construction businessman Fred Story, as well as Carlisle City Council, and carried out by Wardell-Armstrong Archaeology.

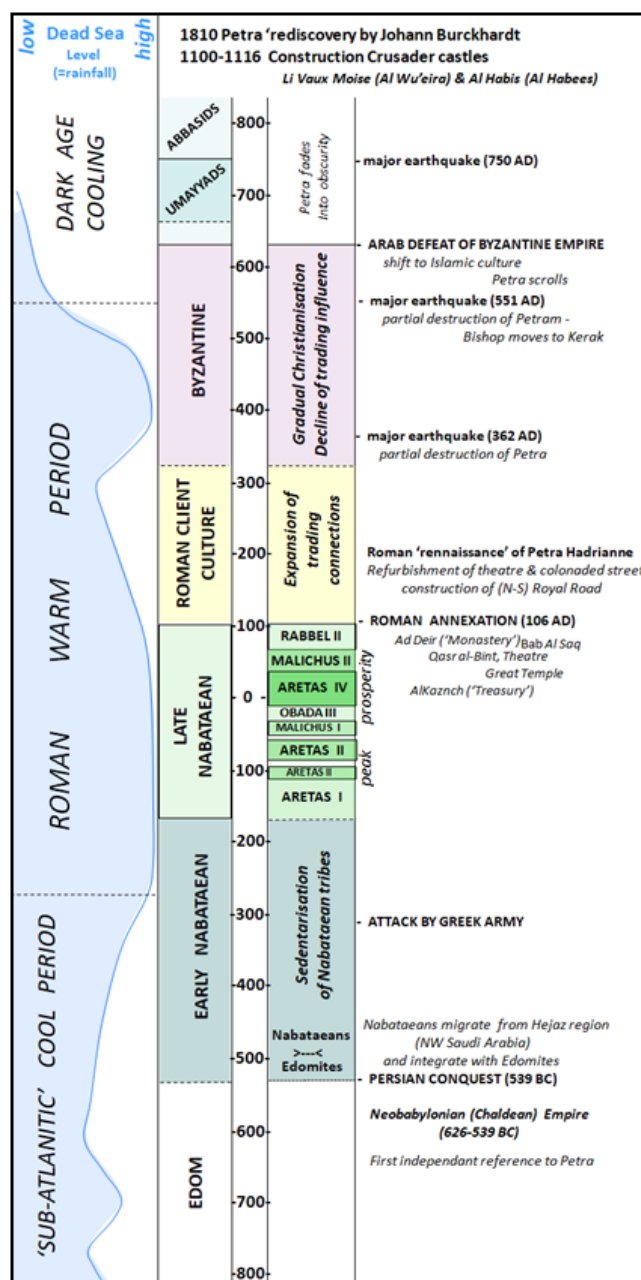
Patricia Shaw March 2019

A holiday in Nabataea or trading incense in warm and cold climates

Your editor was dragged somewhat reluctantly on a trip to Jordan recently – essentially a *"Bronze Age to Lawrence via Petra"* tour led by charming Greek archaeologist Dr Constantine Politis, supported by a very capable Jordanian guide Ibrahim el-Wahsh. The highlight was very definitely the visit to Petra. Although awash with tourists it still conjured up images that *'rose red city half as old as time'* and questions about *'So... what does it all mean?'*

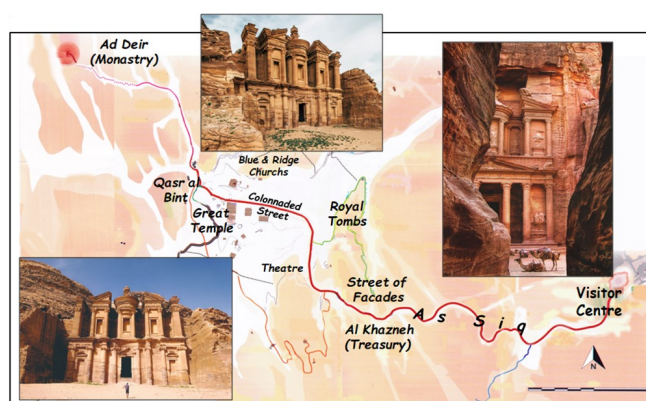


Well, it seems Petra was the largest and most significant 'city' of the Nabataean peoples, living on the eastern highlands flanking Wadi Araba, a continental plate boundary stretching from Aqaba to the Dead Sea and beyond. They were originally shepherds and occasional camel raiders from the Hejaz region of what is now Saudi Arabia. Sometime after the collapse of the Assyrian Empire in 609BC, they migrated west to merge with the more sedentary Edomites of biblical fame, perhaps attracted by the higher rainfall of the



Jordanian highlands. This merger proved a success, blending the metallurgical, water management and artistic knowledge of one with the mercantile and caravaning skills of the other to form what became a very prosperous trading culture. While there is little doubt that sophisticated water management was pivotal to its success, trade and most especially frankincense from southern Yemen and Dhofar with markets in the Mediterranean region was the key to its prosperity.

The first record of Petra is from circa 539-525BC and by 312BC its wealth and fame had attracted the covetous attention of one of Alexander the Great's generals. However despite several attempts he was unable to subjugate the Nabataeans who went on to become an urbanized trading society with links stretch-



After the collapse of the Seleucid Empire circa 192-164BC, the Nabataeans reached the zenith of their power, becoming an organised kingdom ruled by a succession of kings centred on Petra. Petra is located on the rugged flank of the Jordanian plateau at some 1000m, where steep river systems have deeply incised into soft Upper Cambrian-Lower Ordovician (470-500MMyears) sandstones to form the spectacular Al Siq canyon and steep hills around Petra. The archaeology of the valley floor is still poorly constrained covered beneath layers of alluvium but over 800 cliff monuments have been cut into the valley walls ranging from small niches to grand temple facades. Their purpose is uncertain but they probably served as family burial tombs with bones inhumed in sometimes multi-compartment niches ... the larger the tomb, the richer and more prosperous the family. The most spectacular temple facade ... al Khazneh or 'Treasury' is attributed to Aretas IV (9BC-40AD). Most and perhaps all the larger facades were carved in the first century AD at the height of the Nabataean prosperity. Rather than 'rose red' rock these appeared to have been covered in stucco and painted with evidence of quite beautiful interior paintings.

In 106AD, probably with the support of the last king Rabbel II, Nabataea was absorbed into the Roman Empire becoming a 'client' state - part of the *'Arabia Petrea'* province. A Roman renaissance followed with further construction at Petra. However its function may have changed as Nabataean merchants moved to Alexandria, Gaza, Naples and elsewhere continuing to

trade with southern Arabia and India on behalf of their Roman clients. Strabo (64-24BC) records Nabataean caravan trains of more than 2000 camels transporting frankincense from the southern 'spicelands' along the highland margin of the Red Sea. However the Nabataeans were proficient sailors and certainly by the first and second centuries AD seaborne trade had superseded camel transport down the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and India.

Nabataea was absorbed into the Byzantine Empire in the early fourth century and was gradually Christianised. A major earthquake in 363AD demolished most of the free standing buildings at Petra and it gradually lost influence as trading routes changed. It continued as a Christian metropolis with the construction of several churches (one with a very impressive floor mosaic) until another earthquake in 551AD convinced the bishop to move elsewhere. Petra and the Nabataean culture was absorbed by the Umayyad Caliphate circa 661AD and later by the Abbasids in 750AD before fading into obscurity for a 1000 years, only to be 'rediscovered' by Johann Burckhardt in 1810.

Arguably what is most interesting about the Nabataean culture was its relationship to climate. Rainfall estimates based upon Dead Sea lake levels suggest the climate at the time of peak Nabataean prosperity was comparatively wet, ending as the climate became increasingly dry during the late fifth and sixth centuries. These changes appear to mirror those in NW Europe, represented by the Roman Warm Period with grapes growing in Northumbria followed by the 'Dark Age' Cold Period and withdrawal of Romans from Britain.

Vernacular Buildings of Cumbria

June Hill, chairman of the Cumbria Vernacular Buildings Group, spoke to a meeting of the Appleby Archaeological Society on March 14th. She started by explaining that the Vernacular Building Group (partnered with the Heritage Action Group), is not a preservation society but instead one that studies surviving vernacular buildings and records examples of local building traditions in Cumbria. One of the first records of this tradition was published in 1970 by R.W.Brunskill entitled *"Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture"* covering local building methods throughout Britain. This proved so popular, he followed with *"Vernacular History of the Lake Counties"* published in 1974, recording building traditions peculiar to the former counties of Cumberland and Westmorland.

Examples of simple buildings used by medieval peasants have not survived in Cumbria, but a period of great rebuilding took place in Cumberland & Westmorland in the 16th century when housing construction for poorer people was much improved. In the Lake Counties, locally available stone and slate were used for building. Their durability leaves evidence of transhumance, the practice favoured by early Cumbrian farmers of tending flocks high in the fells during summer before returning to the valley in winter.

A new class of farmer emerged during the Middle Ages Yeoman farmers who owned their own land and rebuilt previously rented farmhouses. A great deal of information about these buildings can be found in wills and inventories, often enough to deduce the owners status. By the middle of the 17th century almost eighty percent of Westmorland households had at least one fireplace against a gable wall. A funnel shaped hood lined with lime plaster collected the smoke and a "bacon box" was often provided in the room above where beef and bacon could be cured. A stout piece of wood called a rannel-balk was inserted crosswise in the chimney from which a strong hook, called a ratten-crook, was suspended and used to hang large iron pots over cooking fires. The cooking area was lit by a small fire-window in the front wall and the warmest area in the cottage was created by a partition called a "heck" on the opposite side of the fire. The upper floor of earlier small houses was more akin to a loft since a fixed stepladder was the only means of access until stone spiral stairs were introduced. These can often be seen from outside the property as a semi-circular feature on the rear wall.

In Georgian times the building of "polite" double-pile houses took over from the vernacular and provided the basic layout for the Victorian houses that were to follow.

Barbara Blenkinship

Palaeography Workshops

After an introductory day at The Hub half a dozen hardy individuals decided they would like to take their basic palaeography skills a bit further and took part in several three-hour-long sessions. Participants looked at a wide variety of documents showing different types of scripts and ranging in date from the late 1400s to the early 1700s.

They got to grips with how to start to read and transcribe them accurately so as to make sense of them and discover what information they contained.

The group transcribed lists of loans for practice in reading monetary value (we all had to brush up on the old £ s d system!), early parish registers, inventories which revealed lots of personal and local detail, letters, conveyances and indentures. In addition they were given the task of answering specific questions so as to practice extracting information.

They all progressed from initial bewilderment to some degree of proficiency and are now looking forward to tackling some documents with relevance to Dig Appleby - and importantly they all said they enjoyed the workshops! After the introduction Adrian Waite wrote to say:

"I have always been interested in history but have never done any palaeography / transcribing of documents myself, so when I heard that 'Dig Appleby' was looking for volunteers to transcribe some of Appleby's medieval documents and was offering training, I asked to attend.

It has been very interesting, especially the way in which medieval scribes formed letters and used abbreviations. After a couple of sessions, I am beginning to

to understand documents that I would previously have found incomprehensible.

I have enjoyed doing some transcribing for 'Dig Appleby' and may also follow that up by doing some by myself."

Thank you Allen

Carol Dougherty

Summer Events

Long Meg stone circle and the Maughamby and Glassonby cairns

Thursday 20th June

Meet at Long Meg at 6.30pm for a gentle amble around the stone circle. Chris Wilson will be our leader as he helped Paul Frodsham dig here recently and knows the site well - there is more here than is obvious from the visible remains! Time, weather and enthusiasm permitting we will then visit the remains of the nearby Maughamby and Glassonby cairns, both of which feature rock art.

Digging Deeper Test pit excavations

17th - 20th June

Each day we will be excavating 1m-square test pits at suitable locations in the town and collecting/recording any historic finds identified. Training will be provided in how to dig and record. Look out for the "feather flag" to see where we're digging.

Bookings can be made through the Facebook site

Eskdalemuir Forts and Circles

Saturday 20th July

A day trip to Eskdalemuir. We plan to visit Boonies (a defended Iron Age settlement), Castle O'Er (a spectacular Iron Age Hill Fort) and two prehistoric stone circles (The Loupin' Stanes and the Girdle Stanes). Further details to follow. Contact Martin J (via website) if you're interested.

St Anne's Excavation 22nd-27th July

To coincide with the annual Festival of Archaeology organised by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA), we will be opening a trench in the garden to St Anne's Hospital on Boroughgate. We will be sampling two of the medieval burgages, which were incorporated within the alms-houses garden, founded by Lady Anne Clifford in 1651. Our previous test pits produced quantities of medieval pottery here so we will be hoping for more finds and hopefully identifying the original burgrave plot boundary.

New Light on the 'Dark Ages' in North Craven

Members may recall David Johnson who spoke to us fairly recently about Thorns Medieval Deserted Settlement. He has just published a new book about the 'Dark ages' in North Craven.. It includes reports from six archaeological investigations in the Dales. I bought a copy today and it's excellent.

Anyone interested can either give me £8 and when I next see David I will pick up a copy for you or £9.80 directly from him at dsjohnsoningfield@gmail.com.

Carol Dougherty